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Offices Update

Friday 1 June saw the handover of the new offices at Maclennan Crescent in Inverness. This modern facility will be the new base for our Support Services team. It will also provide opportunities for Invergordon-based staff to have a more frequent presence in Inverness, and be used as a new venue for meetings of the Committee of Management and Sub-committees. Chief Executive, Calum Macaulay welcomed the completion of the new office: "This excellent facility not only confirms our continuing commitment to the regeneration of the Merkinch area but provides a superb office space for staff and much improved accessibility for people with mobility difficulties, which was one of the main deficiencies of our Church Street office." All the services previously provided from Church Street are available from Maclennan Crescent as from 8 June. The office is situated opposite the Gael Force Marine building in Anderson Street and parking is available for visitors, accessed from Anderson Street. Pedestrians can get to the office from either

Maclennan Crescent or Anderson Street and the No. 14 bus runs frequently to and from the city centre and South Kessock.

Pictured from Left to Right at handover: Helen Mackie (Development Officer and Project Manager) Jack Makinson (Contract Manager for UBC), Robert Macangus (Clerk of Works), Alastair Norrie (KLM, Employer's Agent), Bruce Wright (DDA Architects) and Di Norris (Support Services Manager)

During June and July, visitors to our Head office in Invergordon will continue to be affected by the disruption caused by the ongoing remodelling and upgrading of the building. We apologise for any inconvenience this has caused but we expect to complete the project by the end of July. For members of the public, the key improvements will be better access arrangements for people with mobility difficulties and improved provision of meeting and interview rooms and new technology to assist the hard of hearing.

Major Repairs Contracts

Now that the kitchen replacement and Wick heating contracts have been completed, the next phase of our ongoing major repairs programme will be to provide new bathrooms to around 350 properties in Invergordon.

Arrangements are now being made for the contract team to be put together. This will be similar to the kitchen replacement contract in that there will be representation from Albyn staff, tenants, consultants and contractors making up this team. It is hoped that we will be on site towards the end of the year. Like the kitchen contract, a certain amount of disruption to tenant's lives is going to be inevitable but we will do our best to make sure that this is kept to a minimum.

To find out more about a tenant's experience of being involved in our kitchen contract, see the article by Bryan Summerfield in this newsletter.

Care Commission Inspection

Albyn Housing Support Services in Inverness and Nairn are now regulated by the Care Commission. In February we had our second Care Commission inspection.

The Commissioner commented about how the service users spoke very positively about the service being provided. In particular they said that staff are good listeners, and that staff enabled them to do things rather than take over and do them for themselves. They said that staff empowered them and helped them to build up their self-respect. The Commissioner felt that we explain rights to service users clearly, both in tenancy agreements, and in our handbooks.

The Commissioner also made some recommendations. He observed that we have no system in place to check potential staff member's physical and mental fitness to perform the tasks demanded of the particular post. He also said that we need to take a decision about how often existing staff are re-checked with Disclosure Scotland. He made a comment too about our use of temporary contracts for staff, which we have felt the need to use because of the uncertainties of funding under Supporting People. As a result, we have now made two staff previously on temporary contracts permanent.

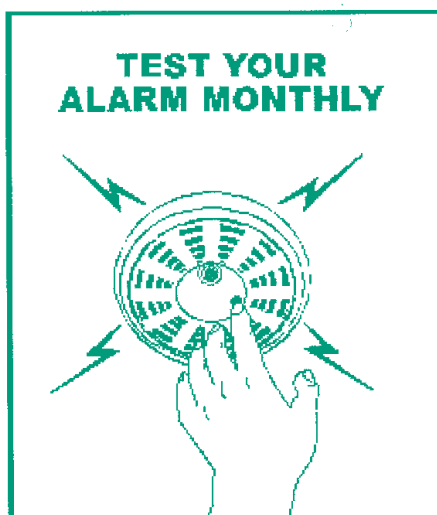
Comments that you would like to make about the service will always be gratefully received and used to help us improve and develop. You can make these comments by telephone or in person at the support service office or to any member of Albyn's staff. A full copy of the inspection report is available from our office, or can be downloaded from the Care Commission website at

www.carecommission.com

Smoke Detectors – A Reminder!

It is our policy that all of our properties should have at least one smoke detector. Usually, these smoke detectors are wired in to the electrical system but some houses may still have battery operated detectors. These are perfectly safe provided that the battery is regularly tested and replaced. We will always check the batteries when houses become empty and make sure that there is a new one supplied at the start of each tenancy. But if you have a battery powered smoke detector in your home, you must test it each month. This is done by pressing the button on the outside of the detector. If the battery is still working, the detector will bleep a few times. **We would strongly urge all tenants who have battery powered smoke detectors fitted in their homes to make sure that they regularly test them. They can and do save lives.**

If you can not test your own smoke alarm due to disability and you do not have a friend or family member who can do this for you, we can do this for you on our next visit to your area. You can arrange a visit by contacting our Invergordon office. You should also contact us if you do not have a smoke detector fitted in your home.



Summer Time... and the Living is Easy

So go the lyrics to the famous George Gershwin song. But is that really the experience for many of us?

Once the clocks move forward and daylight hours increase life tends to move more outdoors. We can all start to enjoy freedom from the confines of 4 square walls, especially children who will happily burn off steam running around with their friends. But sometimes the summer heat (let's at least hope for some) can bring about a particular chill between neighbours, and in the better weather we often find an increase in the number of neighbour complaints we receive.

Here are just a few pointers to enjoying the summer and keeping on good terms with your neighbours:

- ⋯➤ Be extra vigilant. Remember that noise travels further outside – for example, through open windows or if you are having a BBQ or a garden party.
- ⋯➤ If you have a party, set a reasonable finishing time (and stick to it!) and give your neighbours plenty of warning. Perhaps you could even invite your neighbours. Make sure that your guests are considerate too and leave quietly once the party is over.
- ⋯➤ Try to mow your lawn and use power tools at a reasonable time - not early morning and late evening.
- ⋯➤ When children are playing outside they should try to avoid hitting balls against neighbours' walls, doors and windows or into gardens. Of course accidents happen but children should always ask permission before going into a neighbour's garden to get their toys back. It might even be best if the children didn't play directly outside the same house every evening.
- ⋯➤ If you own a dog, make sure it is not left outside for long periods of time if it's going to constantly bark and whine. This could be really annoying for your neighbours. Also make sure your dog is not allowed to run loose and to foul on communal areas.

Development News

The Development Department began the new financial year with Albyn's largest ever programme for the provision of affordable housing. This will see high quality new housing going on site in more than 20 locations in and around the Inner Moray Firth and across the wider Highlands area funded by an unprecedented £18.75 million grant award from Communities Scotland.

Donald Lockhart, the Society's Development Director said: "2007/08 is shaping up to be another busy year with Albyn's biggest ever target for delivering high quality affordable housing across the Highlands. This year will see real progress on the various sites being developed in partnership with the Highland Housing Alliance. It starts in various Inverness locations, and with a special needs hospital reprovisioning project in partnership with the Highland Council and the National Health Service. As well as these there are exciting masterplanning exercises in Lochcarron and Alness. Plus our involvement in the innovative 'Housing Fair' and early discussions as part of the Whiteness development on the site of the former Ardersier fabrication yard".

This programme will produce over 250 new affordable homes for rent and low cost sale. Whilst this level of provision doesn't meet all the high levels of need we know about across our areas, it marks a significant contribution to the improvement to living standards in the Highlands. More details of the 2007/08 programme of investment including timing of site starts and availability of rented and Homestake opportunities can be found on our website at www.albynhousing.org.uk



Focus on Renewables Continues for Albyn

The worldwide concern about climate change caused by carbon emissions is having a real impact on housing providers like Albyn Housing Society given that 27% of all such emissions come from housing. As a Highland developer it's important to lead in this area for a number of reasons: to meet our own sustainability targets; to make progress in the fight against fuel poverty; and to promote affordability by making our homes as low energy as possible.

We are currently very active in this area with over 70 homes now connected to our innovative Biomass district heating project in Aviemore and other renewables projects currently being considered. In addition, our Development Director, Donald Lockhart, recently hosted visits to our solar heating project at Station Court, Alness as part of a Renewables conference held in Alness by the Highlands and Islands Community Energy Company. The Alness project provides free hot water to all 28 new homes equivalent to about one-third of domestic hot water requirements which will provide significant cost savings to residents and CO2 savings for the planet.

Albyn's leadership in this area led to an invitation for Donald to participate in a study tour to North Karelia in Finland in March where he saw some of the leading European technology in wood-chip and wood pellet boilers and community-based district heating systems, and learned how the poorest forest material can be used as a cheap carbon-neutral source of heat energy. The visit was organised and partly funded by Highland Birchwoods as part of the Northern Periphery Project. According to Donald, "The Finland example shows that by establishing woodfuel heating schemes in peripheral areas we could use local timber resources. This would cut the costs of haulage, while increasing local forestry incomes, improving the value of timber crops, as well as saving large quantities of carbon.



Deep in a Finnish forest, low grade thinnings are collected, chipped and immediately transported to a village heating plant nearby for use as affordable fuel in a community heating system to provide warmth against the typical -30°C winter temperature.



This average Finnish home in Joensuu in Eastern Finland is heated by a wood pellet boiler housed in this garage. This technology will shortly be more available in the Highlands with the establishment of the Balcas wood pellet factory in Invergordon.

How are we doing?

Each year in April, we have to provide a range of information and statistics to our regulators, Communities Scotland. This helps them and us to keep a check on how we are performing in

key areas. These are some of our results for this year. (Last year's figures are shown in colour for comparison)

Rent Collection

Rent Due	Actual Collected
£5.7 million	94.6%
(£5.4 m)	(95.2%)

Repairs

Repair type	Maximum Response time	Number of repairs done	Completed on time
Emergency	8 hours	436 (419)	98 % (100%)
Urgent	2 working days	2,821 (1,861)	86% (92%)
Routine	10 working days	2,872 (3,135)	91% (91%)

Chief Executive Calum Macaulay reviewing performance with staff.



Empty Houses

New Homes Let	Re-lets	Rent loss from empty homes	Average time to let
114	207	1.6%	6 weeks
(76)	(233)	(2.5%)	(26 weeks)

Housing Applications

Number of applicants on Housing List at end of year	Average number of new applications per month	Average time to process new applications
5,380	170	14 days
(4,254)		

Finances

We made a surplus of over £3 million in the year before spending £1 million on major repairs (a similar level to last year) to replace kitchens and heating systems. The surplus of £3 million included a donation of £1.6 million from Albyn Enterprise Limited.

The surplus will be added to our cash reserves, to allow us to have a major repair investment programme and to meet the new Scottish Housing Quality standards over the next few years.

Calum Macaulay, our Chief executive, says "We have much to be happy with about our performance during the past year. Although we had over 7% more homes to let, we managed to do so 3 times faster. Our rent loss due to empty properties fell by more than one-third as a result. This is our best performance on voids for many years. Also, we managed to process new applications as quickly as we did last year

even though the list grew by more than 25%. The one blip in housing management was a slight reduction in the rent actually collected. Our performance in achieving our targets for emergency and routine repairs continues to be of a high standard, even though they both fell slightly. The notable difference was in completion of urgent repairs and we are working on improvements to bring that performance back up over 90% again.

So, it was a mostly successful year for housing management and property maintenance and staff have good reason to be pleased with their efforts in providing quality service to our tenants and applicants." More information about our results will be available at our Annual General Meeting (AGM), which will be held this year on 14 August, and in our annual report that will be sent to you after the AGM.

National Tenant Engagement Plans

An update by Albyn tenant Fiona Samson – Secretary of Milton Housing Forum

Registered Tenants Organisations (RTOs) across Scotland were invited to a national conference back in November 2004, to improve the current methods of engagement on national policy issues with the Scottish Executive.

More consultation was needed, and this was done with workshops and a questionnaire that was sent to RTOs. The results showed that there is a general wish to take part in the development of new ways of consulting, in addition to being meaningfully consulted on policy issues. It was decided that there should be 10 regional structures and that the RTOs in each of the proposed regions should be encouraged and supported to arrange local regional conferences, with conference agendas set by tenant representatives to agree how to take this forward.

It was originally thought that The Highlands would be a region that would stand alone because of its vast size. However, this is not the case, and things moved on at a meeting that was held in Glasgow in April 2007. This meeting was attended by tenant representatives from Albyn Housing Society and Highland Council RTOs and also tenant representatives from Argyll and Bute. We decided that we had many things in common in the Highlands and Argyll - we are both vast rural areas. And so we decided we would work together to bring the national engagement structure forward. A short-life working group was set up to arrange a joint conference in August to take this further. All the Registered tenant groups of housing associations and local authorities in both regions will be invited to send representatives to this conference to discuss the way forward in the future.

If you are part of a local group and would like to find out more, or if you would like to speak to someone about getting a group set up in your own local area, please contact the Community Involvement Officer – Lucy Fraser – on 01349-855972, or email her at lucy.Fraser@albynhousing.org.uk

Kitchen Replacement Contract

- A Tenant's Perspective by Bryan Summerfield

As the kitchen replacement contract is now finished, and having been involved on this contract as a Tenant Representative from the start, I have been asked to give my thoughts on the whole process.

This is the first time Albyn Housing have used this type of contract, known as a PPC (Professional Partnering Contract). During this type of contract, the representatives from the consultants, landlord, contractors, kitchen suppliers and the tenant representatives all had an equal say in how the contract was set up and run.

To start with the group was made up of just two staff members and two tenant representatives. Consultants were interviewed with an emphasis on tenant satisfaction, and the job was awarded to Armour & Partners of Inverness. The consultant's remit was to set up and run the project from start to finish, make it successful and work within an agreed budget. Then we interviewed the kitchen suppliers and the contractors. From this process, JTC (65) Ltd emerged as the successful suppliers and

Robertson Construction (Northern) Ltd were awarded the contract for installing the kitchens. Both of these companies were awarded their contracts by being able to impress the selection panel with their stated commitment to, communication and tenant satisfaction.

The first meeting involving all members of the full team was then held to establish the running process of the contract, health and safety issues and site management. It was agreed the tenants would be given choices on the kitchen unit and worktop colours, cupboard handles, wall tiles and floor vinyl. A series of public meetings was arranged to let tenants know about the process. Every property was surveyed by the kitchen supplier, and each tenant was given a copy of their kitchen layout and choices.

Letters were then sent saying when work would start. These letters also contained advice on frequently asked questions. Tenants were also able to make arrangements for a member of the team to visit them to discuss any concerns. Any problems were discussed and sorted out at monthly progress meetings.

From the satisfaction questionnaires that were returned, the vast majority of tenants have been happy with their new kitchen. That is not to say there were no complaints. We did have some but these were sorted out very quickly. Again, this was a big improvement on previous contracts.

During the total 3 year contract, a total of 690 properties were fitted with new kitchens at a total cost of 2 million pounds. From my point of view, this was tenant participation working at its best having tenants opinions listened to and acted upon. To be part of the team who actually had a say in what contractors and suppliers were to be employed by Albyn Housing Society, to have a say in how the contractors dealt with tenants and to ensure tenants received the best service was a thoroughly enjoyable experience. To see the pleasure on tenant's faces made it all worth while.

Satisfaction Survey

TL Dempster carry out a satisfaction survey for us using a third of our residents each year. The key results from the survey report that we received this March are included on our website or are available from our office on request. The overall results are once again very positive.

You have, again reported very high levels of satisfaction with us as your landlord (**94%**), with the quality of services we provide (**92%**), and with the helpfulness and friendliness of staff (**91%**).

You are highly satisfied with the overall design and layout of your homes (**92%**), and with the general neighbourhoods that you live in (**89%**).

The majority of you (**82%**) think that your rents are good value for money, and that you have enough information about how your rent is worked out (**75%**).

You have asked us to give you more information about improvements, anti-social behaviour and the repairs service. We need to find better ways to make sure that you know when our offices are open, or more importantly, about how to contact us when you need to. We need to make sure that more of you know how to be involved in having a say about the decisions we make when you want to, and that you know how the Society is run.

For the first time this year, we also started to send a separate survey to new tenants to ask about our allocations processes. We got very positive responses about the housing application process generally. You were particularly pleased with the speed of the process, our communication with you, and the information available from us. The things you thought we could improve were clarity about the points system, and keeping people up to date with their position on the housing list. Nearly all new tenants thought you got good and clear information from us before your tenancy starts, though about a quarter think you might need better information to be able to operate all the systems in your new home straight away.

As part of our survey, we offered two prizes of £100 and £50 to two people drawn at random from everyone who sent a completed form back. Congratulations to both our winners: Miss J Pollock in Invergordon, and Ms T Rooney in Lochinver

MILTON PRIMARY SCHOOL COMMUNITY WING KITCHEN

Milton Albyn Residents Association played a central role in having a new kitchen installed at their local primary school. Hearing of some extra wider role money that had become available at short notice, they were quick to see an obvious way that their community could benefit from it. The kitchen, in the community wing of the school, is available for all groups in the area to use.

MERKICH COMMUNITY CENTRE

Also benefiting from these monies is the Merkinch Community Centre. New tables and chairs have arrived there in the last couple of months to the delight of the whole community.

Strictly Ballroom?



Albyn Christmas Fundraiser Benefits Homeless Charity

In their annual assault on good taste, staff from all departments this year recreated the BBC's 'Strictly Come Dancing' to raise funds for a nominated charity.

The authentic atmosphere of the inferior TV version was assisted by the participation of willing consultants and solicitors who acted as judges and we were delighted to welcome back our retired Clerk of Works, Uisdean Macbeth who is himself a specialist dance judge. Special thanks have to go to Alistair Norrie of KLM Partnership who shone in the role made famous by Bruce Forsyth.

The glory of winning went to 'Bart the Cuban' and 'Maria Krakatan', also known as Helen Barton and Patrick Quinn from Housing, with an eye-watering display of passion and rhythm in their unique interpretation of the Mambo. A magnificent total of over £730 was raised for the charity nominated by Helen and Patrick: the Highland Homeless Trust Christmas Appeal.

Our next seasonal fundraiser will be the annual Invergordon Raft Race held to support the local RNLI lifeboat team on 18 August—why not put this date in your diary for a fun family afternoon out, and a chance to come along and cheer on your Albyn team!

Plain Speaking

Last year, Albyn Housing Society became a corporate member of the Plain English Campaign. We are very pleased that we have recently received our first 'Crystal Marks' for two important documents:

- our Equalities and Diversity policy statement
- our Comments and Complaints leaflet and procedures

The Plain English Campaign awards the Crystal Mark after they have seen and edited our original version. The Crystal Mark has become widely recognised as a guarantee that a document has been written and designed as clearly as possible. The Plain English Campaign first introduced it in 1990 as a seal of approval - to encourage organisations to communicate clearly. The Plain English Campaign will not give the Crystal

Mark to any document unless it can be read, understood and acted upon by the intended audience.

Housing and Community Services Director, Helen Barton, says: 'This is an important first step for us. We are working hard to make sure that we communicate as clearly as possible with people who need information from us. Using plain English in our documents is part of this. We hope we will be able to collect many more Crystal marks as we start to review the different information we produce over the next few years.'

All these documents are available from our offices, or can be downloaded from our website. More information about the Plain English Campaign is also available at www.plainenglish.co.uk

Wick Heating Replacement

We have now completed the installation of the new district heating systems in Battery Road and Bremner's Walk, Wick. You may recall from a previous Newsletter that this system is run by using excess heat generated during the whisky making process at the nearby Old Pulteneytown Distillery. The excess steam generated by the distillery used to be completely wasted by being expelled from the chimney stack. Now it is piped directly to the houses and used to provide a central heating system in every property. The relatively low cost of producing this hot water means that the Society's tenants in this part of Wick now enjoy considerably cheaper power bills than was previously the case when their energy was provided by the traditional power suppliers.

Emergency Repairs Service

We operate a 24-hour emergency repair reporting service. This service is set up to deal with emergency repairs only.

Emergency repairs include:

- Complete loss of Heating
- Complete loss of Electricity supply
- Flood
- Fire Damage

When you phone the emergency repair number **0845 130 9995** you will be given the chance to select one of two options. Please listen carefully to the options and select whichever one you feel is relevant to your situation. When you select the option for an emergency repair, your call will then go through to a message service. **YOU WILL NOT GET A DIRECT LINE THROUGH TO THE MAINTENANCE OFFICER.** Leave a message, and the on call Maintenance Officer will get back to you as soon as possible. Any emergency work needed will normally be dealt with within a maximum period of 8 hours. In the event of a Gas leak, phone **Transco** on **0800 111 999**, then let us know what has happened as soon as possible.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) for Albyn this year will be held on the evening of **Tuesday 14 August**. The venue and other details will be decided soon. There will be places on our Committee or Management open for election. You must be a member of Albyn to be nominated or to vote. To become a member, you must submit an application and £1.00 fee. The last opportunity to apply for membership before this year's AGM was by 5.00 p.m. on Monday 25 June 2007. However you can still become a member during the year so that you are eligible to take part in next year's elections. Membership forms are available from our Invergordon office.

Invergordon Albyn Residents Association Play Park Project

This article has been provided by Invergordon Albyn Residents Association



After three years of hard work and a lot of begging for funding (thanks to Jaki) the work on the new play park in South Lodge started in May.

We are all very excited about it as I'm sure the children in the surrounding areas will be. The play park is sited on the green in between Ness Gardens and Caberfiedh Drive.

The park will have new lighting and, lovely new fencing around it for safety reasons and also to keep dogs out. One of the gates into the park will have wheelchair access. There will be seating so that parents can sit and keep an eye while their children are having fun, and flower pots to make it look even more

TIGHRA Annual Conference 2007

We are pleased to give you advance notice of this year's TIGHRA conference. TIGHRA is an organisation made up of members from landlords and tenants across the Highlands and Islands and Grampian. It works to develop and promote tenant participation, particularly in rural areas.

Our 2007 conference will be held on **21st and 22nd September** (Friday and Saturday) at the Marriott Hotel, Culcabock Road, Inverness

Don't miss this opportunity to hear what changes are in store for rural housing and communities.

What policy changes will the new administration at the Scottish Parliament make in the drive for affordable housing?

What must we do to sustain our rural communities?

How can we ensure equal access and opportunity for everyone who uses the housing service?

colourful (volunteers for helping with this would be fantastic). And last but not least all the fantastic new equipment for the children to play on. There are going to be 12 pieces of play equipment going in geared towards ages 1 to 11.

Hopefully we will be able to have an official opening day of fun and of course everyone is invited to join in. Look out for the posters on that one!

The last play park in South Lodge slowly but surely got demolished through vandalism and lack of respect for the equipment. This is not going to happen to this one, which is one reason for the extra lighting going in. We would also like to take this opportunity to ask that if anyone does see anybody mistreating the equipment that they report it or have a quiet

Workshops and Breakout sessions will include;

- The Proposed Community Environment Standard
- Ensuring Equal Opportunities for All (Understanding and interpreting new requirements)
- Issues for Homelessness and Housing Allocations
- The National Strategy for Accommodating Sex Offenders.
- Getting To Grips with Housing Performance Reporting .
- Survival Challenges for Rural Communities.
- Sheltered Housing - A Cause for Concern?

Day Delegate Rates start from as low as £55! You may also be able to get help with costs from your landlord or local tenant's group.

Booking forms and full programmes available from TIGHRA Ltd. Fairfax House, 64 Market Place, Inverurie, Aberdeenshire AB51 3XN

Email judith@tighra.org

word with those involved. The children have been without a park for a long time and we want them to enjoy it.

We have already had offers from parents to help keep it tidy and keep an eye on it, which is greatly appreciated and very welcome.

The residents association would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have been involved in the setting up of this lovely park.

The Residents committee meets once a month if anybody would like to join us. We have so many ideas for improving our areas and helping the residents with any problems and at the moment we have 7 members who all work very hard but there is always room for more people. Look forward to seeing you at our next meeting

Contact Jaki Gardener or the Albyn office for more details.



Newsletter Quiz

As we have so much news in the edition, there are a few extra questions for you to have a go at this time! Send us your answers with your name and contact details by the end of the month and you could win £25 of vouchers for a store of your choice.

Our last lucky winner was Mr Mitchell of Rosemarkie.

This months questions are:

1. What is the name of the famous composer mentioned in the Newsletter?
2. What is the maximum time for an emergency repair to be carried out in?
3. How many pieces of equipment will there be in the new play park?
4. When and where is the TIGHRA conference?
5. What did the Merkinch Community Centre buy with the Wider Role funding?
6. How much does it cost to become a member of the Society?
7. When was the second Care Commission inspection carried out?
8. On average, how long did it take, to re-let an empty property in the last year?
9. What dance did Helen and Patrick perform at Christmas?
10. What does RTO stand for?
11. Where did Fiona carry out her on-site assessment?
12. How many routine repairs were carried out over the past year?
13. How many applicants were on our Housing List at the end of last year?
14. How many new homes will our 2007/08 grant funding produce?
15. What will we be replacing next in Invergordon?

Being a Tenant Assessor and What It Means

This article is written by tenant Fiona Samson, member of the Milton Housing Forum

I became a voluntary tenant assessor for Communities Scotland 2 years ago.

With tenants from other landlords, we are a group of tenants from all parts of the country, most of whom have worked in tenant participation at various levels over the years. We form part of the Regulation and Inspection teams that go out to landlords with the regulators, Communities Scotland.

In the last 2 years, I have done a desktop study as part of the inspection of Dumfries and Galloway Housing Association. This involved looking at leaflets that are given to tenants on various subjects, giving my opinion on these, to see if they could be better or if they contain all the information that the tenant may need. I also check the tenant's handbook. What we are looking for is that they are written clearly and concisely, and that they contain the relevant information.

This year I went on-site at Aberdeen Housing Partnership along with Isabell McLaughlan, another tenant assessor, and the rest of the inspection team. Isabell and I had one day in the offices, where I had a chance to talk to the Property Maintenance Manager and the Finance Director about the services that they provided for their tenants. The following day, Isabell and I went with one of the inspectors to visit tenants in their local areas. We talked to them about the services that they receive from the landlord, and whether they think they get a good overall service. When we return we

complete a report that is used as part of the final report from the inspection.

I am also taking part in a thematic study that is being done, on Openness and Accessibility. This involved going to visit a core group of tenants, which operates in the Moray Council area. This is an ongoing study, and it has a different framework from a full inspection, as it is being done on a voluntary basis.

I have learned a lot over the time that I have been doing this. There are lots of differences when it comes to landlords. I never thought when I joined with my local group a few years ago how far it is possible to take Tenant Participation and how interesting the subject can be. It does not have to stop at local groups. There are a lot of volunteers who work hard and have a vast knowledge in social housing, and it can be very interesting working together to make things better for everyone.



Office opening hours: Mon - Fri 9am - 5pm

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www.albynhousing.org.uk

Albyn Housing is a Scottish charity No. SC 027123.

If you need this newsletter or any other information from us in large print, on tape, or in any other format, please let any of our housing staff know.

